

Training for the Hunt

Preparing yourself for the hunt is an important component of a great experience. Just as the proper equipment and accessories are important, eating the right foods and being physically ready are also essential. Eating right and staying hydrated will maximize your physical endurance and mental concentration while your overall fitness level will have a major affect on your comfort and enjoyment of your hunt.

- ★ If you are not currently active or have health concerns it is recommended that you consult your physician before starting a conditioning program.

Where to start!

If you do not currently engage in regular physical activity you should begin by incorporating a few minutes of physical activity into each day, gradually building up to 30 minutes or more of moderate-intensity activities. The Healthy Hunter Workout is based on being able to be physically active at a moderate level for 30 minutes a day, for at least 5 days a week.

What is "moderate-intensity physical activity?"

Moderate-intensity physical activity refers to any activity that burns 3.5 to 7 calories per minute (kcal/min) (Ainsworth et al., 2000). These levels are equal to the effort a healthy individual might burn while walking briskly, mowing the lawn, swimming for recreation, or bicycling. You should be able to talk with your workout partner when doing moderate physical activity, but still break a sweat.

Components of a conditioning program:

Flexibility: Good flexibility in the joints can help prevent injuries. Warm up and stretch before any activity to help warm the muscles and cool down to relax the muscles after activity. Some suggested stretches include: trunk twist, knee hugs, calf stretches, hamstring stretches, and quadricep stretches. Each stretch should be held for 30 seconds with no bouncing and no breath-holding.

Cardiovascular Fitness and Endurance: In order to improve your endurance you need to regularly challenge your heart and lungs. This can be accomplished by doing moderate physical activity such as briskly walking 30 minutes, at least 5 days of the week.

Muscular strength: The key to making your muscles stronger is working them against resistance, whether that is from weights or gravity. If you want to gain muscle strength, try exercises such as lifting weights or rapidly taking the stairs. Whether using hand weights, barbells, or other weight training equipment, remember to start slowly and increase gradually. It is best to start with low weights and more repetitions and do just a few upper body and lower body. Strength exercises can be done three times a week.

- ★ Follow these step-by-step weekly instructions that provide a guide for conditioning your body and eating healthy to maximize your flexibility, endurance, and muscular strength.

Week 1:

Physical conditioning:

Flexibility: Take 5 minutes to stretch before and after your activity.

Endurance: Remember, if you are just beginning to walk, run or to be moderately active begin slowly by doing 10 minute bouts, 3 times a day until you can reach 30 minutes a day in one setting. If you have a hunting dog, take him or her along with you. It is just as important for your dog to be prepared for the hunt!

Muscular strength: Strength activities can be done with free weights at home or at a fitness center or gym. If you have not been doing weight training, it is best to start with less weight and more repetitions. As the weeks progress, more weight can be added to your workout. To avoid injury and soreness, a gradual increase is recommended. If you are not familiar with strength exercises you can access a routine for adults at

http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/growing_stronger/exercises/index.htm

Nutrition conditioning:

1. Drink plenty of fluids (at least eight- 8 ounce glasses of water every day).
2. If you are not eating breakfast, start now. It jump starts your metabolism for the day!
3. If you are not eating fruits or vegetables, increase your servings. Start by eating 2-3 servings of fruits and 3-4 servings of vegetables each day this week.

Week 2:

Physical conditioning:

Flexibility: Take 5 minutes to stretch before and after your activity. The stretching can be done at other times as well such as while watching TV or listening to music.

Endurance: This week consider what moderate activities you like to do and alternate that activity with walking or running. Bicycling and swimming are great alternatives as they involve less stress on the legs but still give cardiovascular fitness.

By the end of week 2, try to do your endurance workout in one session of 30 minutes a day. If you are able to do an additional 15 minutes at another time of the day, that will increase your overall fitness.

Muscular strength: Strength activities can be done three times this week and are important to your overall muscle strength for hauling your pack, gun and harvested game. If you are increasing the weight during your workout, make sure to increase the weight slowly to protect against injury.

Strength exercises for adults can be accessed on this website. You can adjust the weight to match your strength levels.

http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/growing_stronger/exercises/index.htm

Nutrition conditioning:

1. Continue following steps in Week 1 as you move into Week 2.
2. Increase your servings of fruits. One way to get more is to top your cereal with your favorite fruit such as apples, bananas, or blueberries.
3. If drinking soda pop or other sugar sweetened beverages, cut back or replace with water and add a twist of lemon or lime for flavor.
4. Drink low-fat milk and eat low-fat (2% or part-skim) cheeses. Strive to eat 3 or more servings of dairy each day.

Week 3:

Physical conditioning:

Flexibility: Take 5-10 minutes to stretch before and after your activity. Stretching is important as you increase your workouts and will be beneficial during long hunting days ahead.

Endurance: This week on three of your walking workouts consider wearing the boots you will use for hunting. This is a good time to make sure your boots fit properly and are in good condition. If you have new boots or boots that are worn, you have a better chance for blisters or injury. Break them in if they are new. For those who are feeling strong enough, start to increase three of your days this week to 45-60 minutes at a time.

Muscular strength: Strength activities can be done three times a week and are important to your overall muscle strength. If you are increasing the weight during your workout, make sure to increase move the weight slowly to protect against injury.

If you are not familiar with strength exercises you can access a routine for adults on this website and adjust the weight to match your strength levels.

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Nutrition conditioning:

1. Continue following steps in Week 1 & 2.
2. Eat plenty of whole grains (whole grain breads, cereals, pastas, & rice).
3. Try a new fruit or vegetable this week (have you ever had jicama or bok choy?)
4. Remember to eat at regular meal times. Don't skip them. Your body needs energy to maintain endurance.

Week 4:

Physical conditioning:

Flexibility: Take 5-10 minutes to stretch before and after your activity. Any time you stretch will decrease your chance of injury and muscle soreness as you work harder in conditioning.

Endurance: This week again wear the boots you will use for hunting on three of your walking workouts. Walk in an area that is similar to your hunting terrain. Walking in tall grass, shelter belts and cornfields is very different than the groomed trails found in parks and sidewalks. If you are used to carrying a pack and/or gun while hunting, take them with you this week on three of your walks. By the end of week 4, you should notice a difference when you walk that your

fitness level is getting better. This week make sure to take a day to rest and only stretch. Rest is an important component of any workout program and protects against injury.

Muscular strength: Strength activities can be done three times this week but do not do strength the same day you wear your pack during your endurance workouts. If you are increasing the weight during your workout make sure to increase the weight slowly to protect against injury.

If you are not familiar with strength exercises you can access a routine for adults on this website and adjust the weight to match your strength levels.

http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/growing_stronger/exercises/index.htm

Nutrition conditioning:

1. Continue following steps in Week 1-3.
2. Now you should be consuming 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables every day!
3. Choose healthy snack options such as fruits & vegetables, peanuts, raisins, popcorn, jerky, or trail mix.
4. Cut back on fried or high fat foods.

Week 5:

Conditioning program:

Flexibility: Take 5-10 minutes to stretch before and after your activity. Any time you stretch will decrease your chance of injury and muscle soreness as you work harder in your conditioning program.

Endurance: Wear the boots you will use for hunting on four of your walking workouts and walk in an area that is similar to your hunting terrain. Carry a pack and or gun if appropriate as this is as close to the hunt as you will get until opening day. You are at week 5 and almost to the day of the hunt, now is not the time for an injury. Make sure to stretch and monitor your body and rest if needed. It is recommended that you take a day to rest and stretch as is an important component of any workout program and protects against injury.

Muscular strength: Strength activities can be done three times a week but as you get closer to your end goal, maintaining your workout is more important than adding more weight as you want to project against injury.

Nutrition tips:

1. Continue following steps in Week 1-4.
2. Try your sandwiches or burgers with just lettuce, tomato, and onion instead of fatty spreads and sauces.
3. Limit alcohol. It has a dehydrating effect.
4. Eat lean red meat, poultry and fish. Get in the habit of baking or broiling your meat.

Tips for the week before the hunt: (Week 6)

Physical conditioning:

Flexibility: By now you appreciate the value of stretching so take the time you need to stretch before and after you activity. Any time you stretch will decrease your chance of injury and muscle soreness during your conditioning program.

Endurance: If this is the week before your first hunt, rest is important. Decrease your workouts to three times this week with the off days being a moderate intensity walk with just your regular workout gear. Make sure to take a day or two to rest and stretch so that you will be rested and strong your first day out.

Muscular strength: Strength activities can be done three times this week but less weight is encouraged with more repetitions. To protect against injury, this is the time to maintain, not increase your workouts.

Nutrition conditioning:

1. Continue following steps in Week 1- 5.
2. Mix up a batch of trail mix to pack for the trip. Buy a ready-made mix or combine your favorite nuts, sunflower seeds, dried fruit, cereal, small crackers and a few chocolate bits.
3. Take time to shop for food. Make a list and shop smart for quality food. Last minute scrounging through your cupboards or a stop to the convenience store usually doesn't produce the best options.
4. Pack extra food. Difficult situations can lead to big problems if you don't have enough fuel to think clearly – and to keep moving. Always carry an emergency supply of energy bars, nuts, or jerky.

The day of the hunt:

1. Drink ample amounts of water and eat plenty of whole grains. This helps maximize the fluid and energy stores in your muscles.
2. Eat a high-energy breakfast: Power your body for the day ahead with some quick energy (bagels or oatmeal) and long-lasting protein (eggs and Canadian bacon).
3. For long-lasting energy, pack foods that are light in weight, high in calories and packed with protein. Jerky, string cheese and nuts fit the bill on all three criteria. Energy bars and sandwiches with meat and/or cheese can also be good options but keep them cool.
4. Don't forget your personal hydration system (backpack water carriers). They are a great solution for hunters who want to avoid the hassle and noise of water bottles. They are leak proof and carry several liters in a small space. Another added bonus is that you can drink all you need from the tube without stopping!
5. Before you head out to the field for a day of hunting, take 5-10 minutes to stretch. This will help "warm" your muscles up for the big day ahead!